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A SERMON ON ST. JOHN, III. 5.

(Concluded from page 212.)

II. It is time now to consider the second part of Regeneration; the spiritual part belonging to it. Supposing Nicodemus at length to comprehend our Blessed Saviour as referring to Baptism, or Christian Baptism, as distinguished from the Baptism administered by the Jews or by John the Baptist;—supposing him to infer the necessity of this in his own instance, still there is danger that he might be willing to annex no more to this Sacramental Ordinance, than the Jewish Doctors at that period commonly represented it, and indeed every other religious ordinance to denote. They resolved every thing into the act or Rite itself, without adverting to the mind or motive of the receiver, and the principle required to be restored or re-instituted, that they that worship God, must “worship him in spirit and in truth.” This was to make a distinguishing principle of the Christian Institute; and therefore our Blessed Lord took pains to inform Nicodemus, that the new birth, or introduction into His Church and Household, must be not only by Water, but by The Holy Ghost:—it must be a thorough and entire translation of the whole

man, body, soul and spirit, into a new state and condition, into a new character, new dispositions, new views, new principles, new desires, and new hopes. This, upon the whole, is certain, that our Lord, in inculcating the great doctrine of Regeneration, or the new birth, conveys his instruction under two distinct bearings;—as it respects the body, or outward condition and circumstances, and as it respects the mind, in its several and peculiar properties. This is the plain import of our Saviour’s language, the simple, unsophisticated interpretation of any man who will come to the passage, and not bring with him his own preconceptions, his own partial, and very often exceedingly erroneous construction. Take it, as it stands, in itself, and it may be very surprising, that any man could so far mistake it, as to draw from it either an imperfect, or an unfair and unreal meaning. It requires neither ingenuity, nor learning to ascertain the view of this text—which carries upon it the explaining hand of our Divine Master Himself—and yet both ingenuity and learning have been employed to annex to it another construction than it obviously holds out. Sometimes it has been represented to imply the outward part of Baptism only, and not the inward part or thing signified by it: sometimes it has been confined wholly to the in-

ward and spiritual part. A positive denial has accompanied this latter view of the matter in some instances—a positive denial of the divinely instituted sacrament of Baptism altogether! and a careless and supercilious indifference to it has appeared in others! This is as awful, if possible, as the very denial itself—it is indeed a virtual denial, and not less mischievous in its effects and consequences.

It is extremely to be lamented, that injustice is so often offered to this, as to other passages of Holy Writ, by a prejudicate rather than a fair and impartial plan of interpretation. Men bring to them their own personal or sectarian opinions; and are disposed to estimate them agreeably to their respective received systems. Thus has this very important, this most instructive text of scripture, been drawn in occasionally to subserve the various views of different religious persuasions: and among ourselves as Episcopalians we have witnessed, that the two specific and very distinct doctrines, of Regeneration and Conversion, have both been deduced from it. One man conceives that the great doctrine of Regeneration, I mean scriptural and Baptismal Regeneration result from it; and another, that the no less serious doctrine of Conversion, is established by it—thus would the terms become synonymous. The man who maintains, that Regeneration alone is the result of this text, is undoubtedly correct: but even he is apt to confine his ideas to a more straightened comprehension of the subject, than this scripture, it is obvious, designed to afford. He is inclined to dwell upon the Ceremonial part of Baptism alone, and to overlook the spiritual; whereas the text, and the main drift of the passage

taken together does manifestly establish both the one and the other. Regeneration, according to our text, must be by “Water and the Spirit,” i. e. by Baptism, and the effect of the Holy Spirit from on high—accompanying the Holy Rite, when duly administered, and properly received. To be a Christian in name and reality, a man must be baptized, and conformed in heart and life to the requisitions of that Blessed Spirit which dictated the holy Scriptures—he must be a new man, a new creature in Christ Jesus. It is by no means sufficient, that he be baptized—he is then “born again” of water only—(if we may make the distinction:) he must be renewed in the very spirit of his mind, and transformed into the image of that God who created him, in righteousness and true holiness. This mighty operation is ascribable only to that primeval “Spirit of God,” who “moves as upon the face of the waters”—upon the surface of that world which we inhabit, in its original state of Chaos: even to that adorable Person in the Ever blessed Trinity, who is styled The Holy Ghost.

It would be impossible for me to pursue the doctrine through all the difficulties which are thought by some persons to belong to it, in its application and use, with regard to the different subjects of Baptism, as they are infant or adult. To do this would be to philosophize, instead of preaching the articles of our faith. More properly speaking, it would be, to wander beyond the limits of human understanding, and entrench upon those “secret things,” which are said to “belong unto the Lord our God.” Be it sufficient for us, to be “wise” according to what is written, or revealed, and not “above what is written.” “The wind bloweth where it



listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit!" This was the familiar illustration offered by our Lord Himself—and if ever there was a fit opportunity for philosophy or metaphysics to be applied to this subject, it was surely when the Eternal Author of all wisdom and a chief of the Jewish Sanhedrim were conferring together.

It was sufficient for the learned compilers of our Liturgy to find things, as we find them, in the text before us, and in other parts of holy writ: and to draw from thence an admirable and consistent statement of Christian doctrine and Ecclesiastical usage. Permit me to lay before you a cursory view of the sense of our excellent Church upon the subject; and to recommend to you at the same time the precise impressions and practical improvements which she derives from it.

To begin with the first religious rudiments proposed to young minds within her communion, we find it expressly stated, that Baptism, like the Supper of the Lord, as a Sacrament, has two parts belonging to it, or is composed of two parts which are alike essential to it: these are "the outward and visible sign, and the inward and spiritual grace:" exactly conformable to the language of our text—so strictly parallel, so perfectly consonant and harmonious, that it is truly astonishing that any Churchman can have doubt or perplexity on this head. The Catechism proceeds further, and defines these two separate parts: the outward is stated to be, "Water, wherein the person is baptized, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of The Holy Ghost;" the inward is declared to be, "a Death

unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness" (which we are assured, cannot be accomplished but by The Holy Ghost:) "for, being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace."

Have we any remaining doubt? Let us refer to Article xxv, where we have another definition of a sacrament very explicitly given—"Sacraments ordained of Christ be not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession; but rather they be certain sure witnesses, and *effectual signs* of Grace, and God's good will towards us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in Him."

Let us repair finally to the Baptismal Service, and form of administration itself. In the Baptism of adults, or of those of riper years, the very passage of our text is introduced at length as the ground work of the Ordinance. In the first Exhortation it is declared, that none can enter into the Kingdom of God, except he be regenerate, and born anew of Water and of The Holy Ghost. Accordingly in the subsequent prayer, God is implored to "wash" the person or persons offered for Baptism, and to "sanctify them with The Holy Ghost." The consecrating prayer runs as follows: "regard, we beseech Thee, the supplications of This congregation; sanctify this water to the mystical washing away of sin; and grant that the persons, now to be baptized therein, may receive the fulness of Thy Grace, and ever remain in the number of thy faithful children, through Jesus Christ our Lord." After the ministration, the Minister pronounces, that "these persons are regenerate, and grafted

into the Body of Christ's Church;" and calls upon the congregation to "give thanks unto Almighty God for these benefits;" and to join in a prayer, that "God would give his Holy Spirit to these persons," i. e. the permanent aids of His Grace; "that being now born again, and made heirs of everlasting salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, they may continue His servants, and attain His promises, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord." To the whole is subjoined a most earnest and impressive exhortation to the same effect, founded upon the nature and the practical design of the Ordinance itself—"remembering always," saith our revered Church to her Members, "that Baptism doth represent unto us our profession; which is to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto Him; that as he died and rose again for us, so should we, who are baptized, die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness; continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living."

After at any time hearing or reading this, as the conclusion of your own Church relative to this essential Rite, go ye who profess to be Churchmen, go, if ye can, and declare yourselves disappointed, because the doctrine of Regeneration is restricted to Baptism! Is there not, I pray you, in this Holy Sacrament, foundation sufficient to superstruct or raise upon it, whatever can be conceived as great or good in human life and character—for whatever, in truth, can emanate from the Grace and bounty of God to man! Is there not sufficient to answer every idea or expectation of the mind, provided it be rational and scriptural, respecting that change,

which is requisite to bring a man into a state of salvation and acceptance with God; and respecting that new and holy obedience which is to be observed and studied through life—observed and studied, did I say? performed and perfected, as much as in us lieth (and the God of Heaven hath covenanted to be our helper!) to be performed and perfected, I say, assiduously through life; if we would profess the faith, or name the name of Christ, and be acknowledged as worthy members of his Church? Go now, and say, if ye can, that regeneration must be blended with conversion, to make it sufficiently impressive, sufficiently efficient and extensive. Is not then a death and burial unto sin, and a resurrection unto newness of heart and life, sufficiently impressive, sufficiently and thoroughly operative? What can be more sacredly, more awfully coercive from guilt of every kind, than this! Understand me not, as speaking lightly of conversion, forbid it, that I should! but conversion, to speak no more of its being a distinct branch of doctrine, and entitled of course to a separate consideration, conversion, I say is a mere personal act, whereas real, Baptismal Regeneration is Federal. God, and his Church, are the parties and conjoined witnesses on the occasion; and the act becomes as powerful and binding, as the most sacred league and covenant can make it. Shall not the dews of Heaven descend upon it? and if there are influences of power Divine, shall they not rest and dwell upon the "honest and good" subjects of it!

Go, then, if ye can, Christian auditors, and think to amend the doctrines of your Church—yea, more awful the presumption, think to suggest improvements to the doc-



trines of Scripture, and the words of the Saviour! Nay rather, my dear brethren, let us amend our own hearts and conduct, where they are wrong, or at variance with the Christian Covenant; and humbly content ourselves to be still learners in the school of Christ, and of our own Church. Go, may I say, to every member present, go, if you can, and in view of that affecting summary which has been recited to you, as the conclusion of our Baptismal Ministration, go and attach yourselves afresh to the world, to the flesh, or to the works and devices of Satan! Go, trample upon the Divine commandments, and neglect the duties which ye owe to God, whether public, domestic, or private: Go, profane His Name, or His Word; be indifferent to His Sabbaths, His House or His Sacraments. Go, be irreverent to your superiors, haughty to your equals or inferiors, or passionate and unjust to any. Go deal falsely, or speak falsely: Go drink or game, or deviate from chastity and purity: go, be ye envious, malicious, or revengeful: Go idolize yourself, on the customs and opinions of the World; imbibe its spirit, and cultivate its friendship; which, you know, is enmity against God: Go, league with all or any of those hostile powers which crucified the Lord of Glory—and thus “crucify afresh” that Gracious Saviour, whose Cross was inscribed on your infant forehead, and expose both Him and your Church to an open shame! Go then, render it questionable to the uninformed, whether you were ever regenerated; and alas! too evident to all, that conversion has need to pass upon you, to put you once more in a capacity for all the promises of the New Covenant, which you have otherwise forever forfeit-

ed. Go, and bring discredit upon your Christian name and profession; opening the mouths of gainsayers, and as far as you can, prostrating the walls of Zion—Nay rather, my dear hearers, let these words of our admirable Liturgy, this most appropriate and parental admonition, be ever present to your minds: “remember always, that Baptism doth represent unto us our profession; which is, &c.”

Let this truly godly monition be to you, as the Urim and Thumamim on the breast plate of the Ancient High Priest. Write these words upon the Table of your hearts: bind them for a sign upon your hands, and let them be as frontlets between your eyes. Teach them especially to your children and your children's children.”

Finally, if there are here, and alas! there are too many in the world, who have broken the Covenant of the Lord their God, and wandered astray from it; such we warn, in the language of St. Paul, to “repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.” If there are again who have hitherto satisfied themselves, on any plea or ground whatsoever, unknown to the word of God, to decline this holy and indispensable Christian Rite; such we warn, as St. Peter warned his audience on the day of Pentecost: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins:” and we assure them, as He did, “ye shall receive the gift of The Holy Ghost.” We repeat it, from the highest authority, even from the lips of the present Saviour and future Judge of all men, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of Water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.”

To those who have happily been made members of the Church by Baptism, we would intimate the obligation of a most studious and diligent preparation for the Holy Rite of Confirmation, and to such as have partaken of this ordinance also we would recommend a frequent and devout participation of The Lord's Supper. "Ye, beloved," says St. Jude, "building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in The Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life."

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*Abstract of Scott's Discourse on the Resurrection of Christ.*

The restoration of a dead body to life, is no more difficult to Omnipotence, than the production of life at first. The divine operation is in both respects alike incomprehensible; but as we continually observe life to be communicated in a certain way, we call that the law of nature, tho' we understand not our own meaning, and cannot explain how causes produce their effects. But dead bodies do not return to life, in the ordinary course of human affairs; we therefore suppose, some law of nature to the contrary, the violation of which, in any particular instance, we should call a miracle; that is, *a divine interposition and operation to produce an effect, above or contrary to the general energy of second causes.* "Why should it be thought incredible with you that God should raise the dead?" The power exerted is no greater, than that by which thousands of infants receive new life every day; and will man presume to say that God cannot, or shall not exert his power in any way which they have not before observed? If a sufficient reason can be assigned,

for his extraordinary interposition, and the fact be indisputably proved, it becomes as credible as other well attested events.

Universal history, observation and experience, prove that "the world lieth in wickedness." But it hath pleased God, of his infinite mercy, to reveal himself to sinful men; to make known a way in which they might be reconciled to Him, and recovered to Holiness; and thus to introduce a religion suited to rectify the disorders of the world, and unite the honour of his name, with the eternal happiness of unnumbered millions. Miracles, and the resurrection of the Redeemer especially, formed a suitable demonstration that this religion came from God, and served to arrest the attention of mankind. These are the reasons assigned for a divine interposition on this occasion, and more important cannot be conceived.

The Jews, the most inveterate enemies of Christianity, preserve with profound veneration and scrupulous care, the books of the Old Testament. These books evidently contain a system of prophecy, centering in the person and redemption of the Messiah; and among other particulars, his sufferings and death are circumstantially foretold, with clear intimations of his resurrection and subsequent glorious kingdom. We also know that the Gospels were made public, in the earliest ages of Christianity; for they are continually quoted and referred to by these writers whose works have been preserved. From them we learn, that our Lord predicted his own death, and resurrection on the third day, in so explicit a manner, that the Jewish rulers were aware of it, and took their measures accordingly. Yet when the body of Christ was delivered to Joseph, they were so



fully satisfied by what they saw and heard, of his being really dead, that they made no objection on that ground; but they requested Pilate, that the sepulchre might be securely closed, and guarded by Roman soldiers, 'till the third day was past, lest the disciples should steal his body, and say that he was risen again. Notwithstanding all their precautions however, the body was gone, and they were never able to shew by whom it was removed, or what became of it.

The witnesses of our Lord's resurrection survived that event for a long time; some of them nearly forty years, and John still more. They were after awhile separated into different parts of the world; they passed through a series of the severest trials, and almost all of them died martyrs in the cause; but no change of circumstances or situation, no promises or threatenings of men; no expected tortures, or impending dangers, induced one of them in the smallest degree, to waver in his testimony.

They declared unanimously, that on the third morning after the crucifixion, a vision of angels told some of their company, at the sepulchre, that the Lord was risen; that afterwards they all saw him repeatedly; that they examined his hands, feet and side, and were sure it was the same body, which had been nailed to the cross; that he ate and drank with them several times; that at length, after giving them particular instructions relative to their future conduct, He ascended from among them, 'till a cloud intercepted their sight of Him; and that two angels appearing to them, declared he was gone to Heaven. Such an unwavering persevering testimony of the twelve persons whose holy lives, diligent labours, disinterestedness,

and patient sufferings, evince their sincerity, forms so complete a proof, that in any other case, he who was not satisfied with it, would be deemed sceptical almost to insanity.

This however, is but a small part of the evidence; Saul, the persecutor, was endued with superior talents, cultivated by education, and possessed of peculiar advantages for rising in the world; of which he was evidently availing himself, while gratifying his implacable enmity to the Gospel. Yet was he all at once converted into a most zealous preacher of that faith, which he had attempted to destroy and renouncing all his former principles and worldly prospects, and exasperating above measure his former patrons and employers; he spent all the remnant of his days in the most self denying labours, hardships and sufferings, for the sake of Christ, and of his Gospel; and at length he sealed his testimony with his blood. How can this fact be accounted for, unless we allow the truth of his narrative, concerning the manner of his conversion? And if that be allowed, the resurrection of Christ is demonstrated. In the 15. Chap. 1. Cor. St. Paul declares, that Christ appeared after his resurrection, to above five hundred brethren at once, *of whom the greater part remained to that time.* But no one ever attempted to disprove the truth of his assertion; though false teachers would have concurred with open enemies, in such an attempt, had it been practicable.

The testimony of the Apostles to the resurrection of Jesus, implied a charge of the most complicated wickedness against the rulers of the Jewish nation. These had the power in their hands, and were every way concerned to vindicate their characters, and punish those who thus ac-

cused them. They indeed bribed the soldiers to circulate a self-contradictory report on this subject, which would not bear investigation. This St. Matthew afterwards publicly charged upon them. If the rulers could have accounted for the removal of the body, no doubt can reasonably be made, but they would have done it in the most public manner.

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Every reflecting person must perceive, that the evidence is completely satisfactory, *provided it can be made clear that these books were published at the time to which they refer.* To obviate every doubt on that head, I would enquire at what subsequent time it could have been possible to obtain credit to writings of this description? Writings which contain a circumstantial narrative of "things not done in a corner," but in the open view of mankind, during several years, and connected with an epistolary correspondence resulting from them, could never have obtained the least credit in the world, *if published after the time referred to, with an express appeal to mankind, that they all along had been familiarly acquainted with them.* Such an insolent attempt to persuade whole nations out of their senses and understandings, must have excited universal astonishment and indignation. Had it been possible to convince even a few individuals, that they had received these books from their ancestors, and been taught from their infancy to revere them as the writings of the Apostles; when in fact, neither they, or any other persons had ever before either seen or heard of them; the effrontery of the deceivers, and the credibility of the deceived, must have constituted an unprecedented event, and marked the age in which it occurred. No

time can be mentioned, when any attempt of the kind is so much as hinted at, by either Christian, Jewish, or Pagan historians. The writings in question, were extant and well known in the Church from the very period in which they are said to have been published.

We should also remember, that on the day of Pentecost, immediately following the resurrection of Christ, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the assembled Apostles, with such extraordinary circumstances, as drew together vast multitudes, who then resided at Jerusalem. In the presence of all these witnesses, they spoke, fluently and correctly in the languages of the several countries from which their hearers were collected; though it was certainly known that they had not had the opportunity of learning them; and this stupendous miracle, together with St. Peter's sermon upon the occasion, was made effectual to the conversion of three thousand persons. The gifts of tongues, and of working miracles in the name of Jesus, were frequently exercised in the most public and undeniable manner, before numerous witnesses, enemies as well as as friends. The same powers were likewise communicated to many others, by the laying on of the Apostles hands. The time, place, occasion, and circumstances of these transactions are frequently specified in the writings. Thus the people of many cities and countries were appealed to, and the enemies of Christianity were challenged to disprove their pretensions. But none ever attempted to do it. "God also gave them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost." And can any reasonable man suppose, that a general belief could ever have prevailed, through whole nations, of



such public and extraordinary events without any person attempting to deny them, if they had not actually happened, and have been so notorious as to be incontrovertible?

The chosen witnesses of our Lord's resurrection, were the principal writers of the New Testament. Now in those books, prophecies are asserted, which have been accomplished ever since to the present day. A sceptick indeed might doubt whether the predictions concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, and the temple, were not written after the event. But who can account for other parts of the same prophecy, without allowing that the writer was divinely inspired? Could human sagacity have foreseen such an unparalleled series of events? Or would God have thus confirmed the testimony of impostors? And does not this prophecy, thus wonderfully accomplished, demonstrate the truth of Christianity?

A few unarmed, obscure, unlettered men, by preaching a crucified and risen Saviour, in the midst of persecution and sufferings, established Christianity on an immovable basis, and their successors following their example, so wonderfully prevailed, that at length Judaism and Paganism fell before them; the religion of Jesus was professed by powerful nations, and however corrupted or debased, it subsists to this day! It is an undeniable fact, that plain preaching, fervent prayers, holy lives, and patient sufferings, were the only weapons that the primitive preachers of the Gospel opposed to all the authority and learning of the world, which were resolutely employed against them; and yet they decidedly triumphed in a contest apparently so unequal. A wise man will always allow, that every effect is produced by some adequate cause; but what

adequate cause of this astonishing effect can be assigned, unless we allow that Christianity was of God, and man could not prevent its success and triumph? I will only add, that every instance which at this day occurs, of notoriously wicked persons, converted by the preaching of the Gospel from evil ways, and afterwards walking in newness of life, constitutes a proof that Christ is risen; that he has all power in Heaven and Earth, and is efficaciously present with his faithful servants, "always even to the end of the world." Universal uncertainty and doubt must be the consequences of rejecting such unanswerable and multiplied evidences, as the Lord has mercifully vouchsafed us, of that great event, the Resurrection of our Saviour.

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But it would be the grossest inconsistency, and the most absurd trifling, to contend that Christ is risen, and then deny or overlook the peculiar doctrines, which his resurrection was intended to authenticate. Jesus then is indeed the son of God, "one with the Father." "God manifest in the flesh." When incredulous Thomas was at length convinced that Christ was risen from the dead, all that he had before heard, seen, believed or hoped, seems at once to have rushed into his mind; and he exclaimed in adoration, "My Lord and my God." It now was manifest, that he was warranted to say, "I and my Father are one." "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me." "I am the light of the world." "I am the resurrection and the life." In short, the resurrection of Christ not only demonstrates the truth of Christianity, but the infallible certainty of all its doctrines, and au-

thenticates the whole scripture as *divinely inspired*.

For if Christ be risen from the dead, then is his atonement accepted. "He died for our sins and rose again for our justification." "Having overcome the sharpness of death, he hath opened the kingdom of Heaven to all believers." The foundation of our hopes is now surely laid; the way of access to a throne of grace is now made manifest. "All the fullness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily." "He is become the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him;" and he must reign till all his enemies are made his foot stool.

"Kiss the son lest he be angry, and ye perish." Every individual must either bow to the sceptre of his grace, or be broken in pieces by the iron rod of his Omnipotent indignation.

As Christ is risen from the dead, he "is become the first fruits of them that slept." "The hour cometh, when all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation. At that awful period, he will ascend his tribunal, finally to separate his people from his enemies; and "these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." The believer then, when strong in faith, may adopt the Apostles words and say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The subject before us is peculiarly suited to the burdened conscience, and desponding heart of those, who

are "poor and of a contrite spirit, and tremble at God's word." Did the son of God so love and pity proud obstinate rebels and enemies, as to give himself a sacrifice on the cross for their sins? And will He, now on his glorious throne, refuse to stretch forth His powerful arm to rescue the humble penitent, who earnestly supplicates his mercy? No—He delights to save. Come to Him—wait on Him—wait in the appointed means, and you shall soon know the power of His resurrection, the depth of His condescension, and the riches of His grace.

#### *A few Plain Directions.*

If ever you are brought to love God, it must be in this world. In heaven and hell no new dispositions are planted; but those, that are found prevalent in the soul, will ripen and grow to perfection. None begin to grow wicked in hell, or to love God in Heaven; the seeds are all sown in the present state, which then spring up to maturity. Therefore, if ever you would have the love of God shed abroad in your heart, now, now is the time; now or never.

But "what means (you will say,) shall I use for this purpose?" Here I must be short; but if you are really in earnest, you will easily understand the shortest hints.

1. Labour to be deeply sensible of the aggravated sinfulness and danger of your present state. Deeply impress your minds with this. *Check the levity of your mind, and indulge a serious, anxious, sorrowful temper; for your case really requires it.*

2. Be deeply sensible of the necessity of divine grace to change your hearts, and inspire you with divine love. The disease is so far gone, you cannot heal yourself, but blessed be God, He is able to make



you his hearty friend and dutiful subject. Therefore

3. Betake yourself to earnest prayer; and confess your guilt, your vileness, your liableness to Divine displeasure; cry for his spirit to shed abroad his love in your heart. Endeavour to devote yourself to Him; to give up your disaffected heart to him; to bow your rebellious soul at his feet.

4. Meditate upon the glory of God, his kindness to you, the love and sufferings of Christ, and such subjects as tend to beget and inflame your love to him.

5. Be not weary in the use of those means, but persevere, hold on, until you find a thorough change produced in your heart; your eternal all is concerned; therefore be not remiss and careless; be not soon tired or discouraged; never give over until your last breath; and who knows but that hostile spirit of yours may soon become the friend of God, and at length shine among his celestial friends, in all their transcendant glories, and ineffable and eternal felicity.

#### *On the Folly of trusting to a Death Bed Repentance.*

Wedded to this miserable existence, says Kirwan, our hopes are afloat to the last. The understanding, clear in every other point, casts not a ray on the nature of our condition however desperate. Too frequently it happens, that every one around us at that awful moment, conspires to uphold this state of delusion. They shudder for us in their hearts, yet talk to us of recovery with their lips, from a principle of mistaken, or to give it its proper name, of barbarous lenity. The most important of all truths is withheld, till it is of little use to impart it. The consequence is ob-

vious. Our eyes are only opened, when they are to close forever. Perhaps an instant of reflection to be made the most of; perhaps to be divided between the disposition of worldly affairs, and the business of eternity! An instant of reflection, just God! to bewail an entire life of disorder! to inspire faith the most lively, hope the most firm, love the most pure! An instant of reflection perhaps for the sinner, whom vice may have infected to the very marrow of his bones; when reason is half eclipsed, and all the faculties palsied by the strong grasp of death. Oh, terrible is the fate of those, who are only roused from a long and criminal security, by the sword of his Divine justice already gleaming in their eyes. Remember, that if any truth in religion be more repeatedly pressed on us than another, it is this—that *as we live, so shall we inevitably die*. Few of us, I am sure, live but in the intention of throwing an interval of most serious reflection between the world and the grave. But let me warn you, on that point. It is not given to man to bestow his heart and affections on the present scene, and recal them when he pleases. No, every hour will draw our chains closer. Those obstacles to better practice, which we find insuperable at this moment, will be more insuperable as we go on. It is the property of years to give wide and immoveable root to all passions. The deeper the bed of the torrent, the more impossible to change its course. The older and more inveterate a wound, the more painful the remedy, and more desperate the cure.

The extreme folly therefore of building on a future period, is clear and verified by a lamentable string of experience. But, independent of

this, how can we persuade ourselves, that He who expressly demands pure and voluntary sacrifices, will be satisfied with those that are made at last from mere terror and necessity? But if danger be not apprehended, while the thunder of Heaven rolls at a distance, believe me, when it shall collect over our heads, we may be fatally convinced, that a well spent life is the only conductor that can avert the bolt. And let us reflect, that time waits for no man. Sleeping or waking, our days are on the wing. If we look to those that are past, they are but as a point.

It is to the incomprehensible oblivion of our mortality, that the world owes all its fascination. Observe for what man toils. Often all that can degrade the dignity of his nature, and offend his God! Study the matter of the pedestal, and the instability of the statue. Scarce is it erected, scarce presented to the stare of the multitude, when death, starting like a massy fragment from the summit of a mountain, dashes the proud Colossus into dust. Where is the wretched and deluded being, who fondly promised himself, that he had laid up much goods for many years? Gone to his account; a naked victim, trembling in the hands of the living God! Yes, the final catastrophe of all human passions is rapid as it is awful. Fancy yourself on that bed, from which you never shall arise, and the reflection will exhibit, like a true and faithful mirror, *what shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue*. Happy they who meet that great inevitable transition, full of days! Unhappy they, who meet it but to tremble and despair! Then it is, that man learns wisdom; when it is too late. Then it is that every thing will for-

sake him, but his virtues or his crimes. To him the world is past, dignities, honours, pleasures, glory; past like the cloud of the morning! Nor could all that the great globe inherits, afford him, at that tremendous hour, as much consolation, as the recollection of having given but one cup of cold water, to a child of wretchedness, in the name of Jesus Christ.

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*Extract from Fabor on the Predestinarian Controversy.*

Man has ever delighted in systematic compactness; and this passion which springs in reality from an over weaning opinion of his own reasoning powers, Holy Scripture is admirably calculated to mortify.

In every controversy, much useless altercation might be avoided were all extraneous matter carefully separated from those points concerning which the controversy is agitated.

Thus in the disputes between the Calvinists and the Armenians; no doctrines ought to be termed *Calvinistic*, but those which belong *exclusively* to Calvinism. The tenets of *original sin, human insufficiency, justification by the sole merits of Christ*, and certain others which might be mentioned, are no more peculiar to that system, than the doctrine of *the Trinity*, and yet many Calvinists are wont to claim them as entirely their own. As for the Church, she has explicitly declared her assent to them, but it does not therefore follow, as the more intemperate among the Calvinists would persuade us, either that she requires us to subscribe every peculiarity of Calvinism properly so called, or that all those who hold with the Church the doctrines of *original sin, human insufficiency*



and justification by the sole merits of Christ, must hold the tenets of particular redemption, reprobation, and election according to the Calvinistic interpretation of the word\*.

In all ages of the Church nothing has so much injured the cause of truth, as an extravagant and bigoted adherence to system and party, combined with the pride of never giving up an opinion which has once been advanced. Prejudice in favour of any particular system blinds the eyes of the understanding: party spirit produces at once extreme rashness and determined pertinacity; and the stubborn pride of human nature has afterwards no inconsiderable share in perpetuating those controversies to which a love of system originally gave birth. What a man has once asserted he is ashamed and unwilling to retract; and he will often have recourse to the most disingenuous sophisms, rather than honestly confess himself to have been mistaken. These sophisms, being very easily detected, are sometimes exposed with rather too much sarcastic triumph: whence a certain irritation of mind is produced, which usually vents itself in seizing the earliest opportunity of making reprisals. The more severely each party is treated, the more it becomes wedded to its own peculiarities, and instead of endeavouring to heal the breaches in the Church, it strives to recede as far as possible from the ground occupied by its adversary.

\* Our articles affirm certain things, which we hold *in common* with the Calvinists, says the late Bishop Horsley: so they affirm certain things which we hold *in common*, with the Lutherans, and some things which we hold *in common* with the Romanists. It cannot well be otherwise; for as there are certain principles which are *common* to all Protestants, so the essential articles of faith are *common* to all Christians.

With regard to the Calvinistic controversy, a sober enquirer may possibly be disposed to think, that the fault of the violent on each side of the question is this: they are alike unwilling to take the Bible as they find it, and they are alike anxious to deduce a chain of *their own* conclusions from premises which *themselves* are undoubtedly *scriptural*. These two different sets of conclusions, when worked up into two opposite systems, are respectively adopted as the creeds of the two parties. The consequence is, the violent of one party run away with one half of the Bible, and the violent of the other party with the other half, both equally striving either to bend, or to break those texts, which do not agree with their preconceived opinions.

#### *On the Influence of Conversation.*

Conversation has ever justly been accounted a powerful instrument of good or evil, and the vice or virtue of the world has ever, in a great measure, been owing to it. *Now* if ever it is necessary for us to exhort all that have a concern for their own souls, to shun the way of the sinner, and refrain their feet from the path of the wicked. *Now* if ever it is necessary for us to exhort all who fear the Lord, to unite for the defence of his honour, and for the security of their own souls. There is nothing in discourse, that speaks us Christians; the least air of seriousness is singular and unfashionable. Religion seems to want assurance, to distrust its own cause, and in a manner, to be out of countenance every where, but in the closet and the temple, and there is danger that we shall be more ashamed of virtue than of vice.

Men are generally such as their acquaintances and familiars are. There

is a general and plain reason for this; all are naturally lovers of themselves, and therefore the most effectual way of endearing and obliging each other is by mutual respects and compliances. 'Ere we can be pleased ourselves, or please others, we must be mutually fashioned and moulded into an agreement and conformity of principles and morals, and moved and led by the same desires and passions. Hence the saying, *men are generally such as their companions are.*

*First then—Of the influence which good company has on us towards making us wise and good.* There are two things in which wise men never fail to work upon their friends and acquaintances. First, good discourses.—Second, good examples. As to good discourse—How manifest is the tendency of this? What light, what strength, what pleasure does it minister? How does it awaken the conscience and purify the heart? How does it quicken us when we languish? How does it recal us *when we begin to forget ourselves and lay aside a wise sobriety of mind and holy fear?* How often does it kindle in us wise desires and holy purposes? *The lips of the wise dispense knowledge.* This kind of discourse ministers grace to the hearer; *edifies and builds us up in our holy faith. Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?* When God and our great Mediator, when the riches of divine grace, when righteousness and Heaven are the subjects of our discourse, when our language flows from the heart, and is animated by a vital and experimental sense of what we talk of, when it has all the advantages, which true friendship and known integrity can give it, such discourse can never fail of moving and affecting us.

As to good example—Virtue never appears so beautiful and lovely as in action. It is represented with much more life, in the practice of a wise and good man, than it can be in rules and precepts; the excellencies and perfections of a friend, are very strong excitements to emulation, and very sensible reproofs of our remissness and comparative barrenness and unprofitableness. In them we have plain demonstration of the truth and power of religion; we can no longer imagine that faith is a mere speculation or amusement, or virtue a mere pretence or name.

*Of the influence of bad company.* Sin is catching and infectious. Human nature is so prone to evil, that it needs but very little temptation, or encouragement to it; ill principles and practices are soon propagated, and will bear down all the opposition, which education or decency, or the checks of natural reason can raise against them. Nay holiness itself, unless well grown and deeply rooted, can scarcely resist the contagion which ill company spreads. *Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burnt?—Evil communications corrupt good manners.* What but polluted streams can flow from a polluted fountain? What but evil can an evil man bring forth out of the *evil treasure of the heart?* How hard is it even for a good man to preserve the purity and sobriety of his mind, where pride and the ostentation of life, are the only things admired, and there is nothing that is wise or good, devout or humble? If a virtuous person can in such company scarcely keep his ground, how easily are those borne away by the stream who are of themselves but too prone to evil, and too fond of temptation? Ill company does naturally instil and propagate vicious principles. Here we are fur-



nished with excuses and apologies for sin, here we learn to ridicule religion and conscience, and to dispute ourselves out of all sense and duty. And at this day, these errors which fret like a canker, and censure every thing that is wise and serious in us, are multiplied beyond all measure.

*Ill company creates confidence in sin.* A custom of *talking unconcernedly and loosely*, does naturally make way for carelessness in our actions, and if we repeat either often, we shall naturally grow bold and stupid in sin. If we neglect to make any reflection upon our words or actions, we shall insensibly be betrayed into a hardness of heart; or if we be driven (by the reproaches of our consciences upon reflection.) to take sanctuary in the cheats and impostures, which sinners are wont to put upon themselves, we shall sink into prophaneness and atheism. LUCAS.

Selections.

“When he,” says our Lord of the promised Comforter, “is come, he will convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” These are part of the effects, which follow from his divine illumination. When freed from the power of our proud and carnal prejudices, we are led to scriptural views of the perfections, law, and government of God, and our relations and obligations to Him; we begin to form a right judgment of ourselves, our past conduct and the present disposition of our hearts. This produces a conviction of our sinful state, an enquiry after the way in which man may be justified before God, and a serious expectation of the future judgment. And when this conviction is rendered deep and permanent, it prepares the soul for understanding, and

welcoming the revelation of the gospel, “submitting to the righteousness of God,” and “counting all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ,” and his salvation. Nay, the want of this conviction is the grand reason why the peculiar doctrines of Christianity are so much neglected, despised, or perverted, by men called Christians. We should feel and act as they did, at the day of Pentecost, who hearing St. Peter’s discourse said, “men and brethren, what shall we do?” And when further instructed in the gospel “they gladly received the word.”

It is one grand part of the office performed by the Holy Spirit, to give us high and honourable apprehensions of Christ; to render *Him glorious in our eyes, and precious to our hearts*; to endear to us his person, his love, his salvation; to excite in us fervent desires after the blessings he bestows, and to fill us with admiring, adoring love and gratitude to Him.

True repentance, faith in a crucified Saviour, and a heart prepared for fervent prayer, are the effects of the Spirit; and surely it is necessary that we should mourn over our sins and be humbled for them, and by faith look unto Christ, and lift up our hearts in prayer. Indeed the expression “praying by the Spirit,” or “praying in The Holy Ghost,” is commonly used in the New Testament, however at present, not unfrequently treated with profane ridicule. It certainly does not mean praying *extempore*, for men may learn to pray, in this manner, without the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, and he very often enables those, who use a form, to lift up their hearts with fervency unto God. In short, whate-

ver words be used, we never pray spiritually, except as the Holy Spirit enables us truly to desire the blessings we implore, and so to exercise faith in the promises of God, through Jesus Christ, as to expect that our prayers will be answered. And when these desires become fervent, and these expectations very lively, "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, and we pray with groanings, which cannot be uttered."

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit." In a word, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His." All true believers are "led by the Spirit," "live in the Spirit," "walk in the Spirit," and are "an habitation of God, through the Spirit." All genuine consolation is likewise conferred by the Holy Spirit, who is emphatically called "The Comforter." As a spirit of adoption, he "witnesses with our spirits that we are the children of God," not by any immediate revelation, but by forming our hearts, to all holy and filial affections towards God, and bringing reverence, confidence, love, gratitude and zeal, for his honour, into lively exercise.

Whatever "strength in our souls" we need in order to "all long suffering with joyfulness," to resist temptation, to overcome the world, and to meet death with cheerful hope, is ascribed to the Holy Spirit. "What, know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" Certainly then, you are very ignorant of real Christianity, and strangers to the distinguishing joys and comforts, and supports of true Christians.

We should meet with kindness and meekness every dawning of light and conviction, and spare no pains in leading forward the newly awakened sinner, notwithstanding his mistakes, prejudices or ignorance, imitating Him, who "did not quench the smoking flax, or break the bruised reed." It is indeed proper, to avoid such encouraging language as may tend to self-deception; but whatever can inspire the hope that animates to diligence; whatever can tend "to lift up the hands that hang down, and confirm the feeble knees, or make straight paths for the feet, that that which is lame may not be turned out of the way but rather be healed," should be perseveringly attempted. "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye; but not to doubtful disputations."

"Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near," and beware of trusting in any transient impressions, which leave no abiding effect on your general temper and conduct; for no persons are more hopeless in their impenitence, than they who groundlessly think that they have repented. Yet be thankful for any degree of *feeling*, and disposition to relent and submit to God, but give diligence and exercise watchfulness, that these convictions may be rendered deeper, and made more effectual in producing works meet for repentance.

The pleasures of the world when tried, will be found to be cold, fleeting and unsubstantial, as the glories of a winter sky. Are *they* worthy to divide our affections with Him, who infinite in goodness accepts the imperfect; showers his bounty upon the unprofitable, and opens even to the rebel the arms of a Father.